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THE TRUTH ABOUT "PROTECTION."

BY

JOEL BENTON.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

It is impossible to discuss a topic exhaustively, which requires an octavo, within the limits of a brief essay. I have therefore been obliged to omit much from this tract that might have been forcibly said on behalf of my contention. The college boy, who had for his subject "Infinity," and but five minutes to treat it in, represents my situation.

But I trust I have given here proper attention to the fundamental points that are the basis of "Protectionism." When the whole American people shall once thoroughly understand them, a better day will dawn for the republic. To contribute slightly to that end has been my chief purpose in writing this essay.

The Author.

Poughkeepsie, N. Y.,
Aug. 18, 1892.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT "PROTECTION."

"PROTECTION," so called, is the sugar-coated label for a vast and complicated system of high taxation applied to commerce. This taxation is not placed for purposes which make taxation just and lawful, but for the benefit of certain special firms and businesses. While it is put directly upon imports, so that all goods foreign and domestic are raised in price by it, it is also a burden upon exports, since this enhancement of price, both upon manufactured articles, and the raw material from which they are produced, makes competition in the world's markets either very difficult or utterly impossible. It has been called the "American System" for it reaches out always for high-sounding names and phrases; but it is no more American than the Mohammedan religion is. It was the invention of foreign and despotic governments, and came down from ancient and mediæval times. In a free government like ours, where the people are declared to be

equal, it is an anachronism and a stinging injustice.

"Protection" is an anomaly in our government, for it is a species of socialism, no counterpart to which exists under our constitution and laws. It has, in fact, no direct warrant in law. Whenever and however it has been established here, it has got into existence as a parasite, and consequently by a fraud upon the people. Before every tariff bill the introductory or enacting clause says: "An act to raise revenue," or words of tantamount meaning. It is only by this swindle of professed intention that "Protection" lodges itself in our legislation, or can possibly get a foothold—if you omit the one provision in the McKinley bill whereby direct bounties are given to the sugar producers. It is hardly necessary to cite this exception, however, for "protection" by bounties is not likely to be repeated. Even the "Protectionists" dread the open character it gives to their theoretical and esoteric nostrum which works best the more its *modus operandi* is kept out of sight and is unknown. Fortunately, this instance of "Protection" has been legally defined to be a proper part of the system. This, while it settles the fact (which your "Protectionist" gets red in the face in denying) that the tariff is a tax, also contro-

verts in another point the unanswerable decision of the late Justice Miller—one of the clearest-minded men ever on the United States bench—who said in the celebrated Topeka case (Loan Association *vs.* Topeka):

> "To lay with one hand the power of the government on the property of the citizen and with the other to bestow it on favored individuals to aid private enterprises and build up private fortunes is none the less robbery because it is done under the forms of law and called taxation. This is not legislation. It is a decree under legislative forms."

This brave and honest decision makes one thing plain: Wherever there is "Protection" there is robbery. In imitation of a certain belief of theology, the government under this system is made to show preference to a few and impose preterition and reprobation on the mass. By its operation the tariff beneficiaries are bountied while the great multitude of the people are bled for their benefit. The favored producer represents but a comparative few, while the plundered consumer represents everybody.

"Protectionism," as has been well said, is the doctrine that waste makes wealth.

If a son should ask his father for capital to assist him to do an unprofitable business—the fact being known to both that for a period of

fifty or a hundred years it could not be made profitable, so that at the expiration of that time it would still need the father's fostering purse, with no predictable epoch in sight when the subvention might cease — the father would promptly decline the request, even though he were a "Protectionist." Yet this is precisely what he, as a faithful son of the Government, asks the Government to do for him or for somebody. If a business by a careful outlay of capital, by wise economy and by Yankee shrewdness and inventive wit cannot possibly be made to pay, it is a positive loss to undertake or continue it. And the Government, in this case, should not be asked to tax the people for its support. If it can be made to pay, as the large multitude of manufactories and crutched-up industries can of themselves, then "Protection" is an impertinence and uncalled for. In any event it is a swindle, though it be embodied in a hundred statutes. The supposition that a country can be forced into unprofitable businesses with ultimate gain, which individuals cannot contrive to make successful, is one of the fundamental errors which underlie "Protection."

But this is only one of its many hallucinations. It is a dogma of pseudo-political economy which seems to have been born on the

pupil's side of the kindergarten or nursery, for it is a distinct attempt at compassing the child's desire of being able to "eat your cake and have it too." But the proverb says, and says rightly, that this feat cannot be done. The way the "Protectionist" thinks he can do it is by trying to sell without buying. He does not perceive that all trade, reduced to the final analysis, whether between individuals or nations, and whether money or commodities are used, is nothing more nor less than barter. And what is called trade between nations is really nothing more than so many individual bargains. If they can be profitably made they go on and benefit results. If they cannot, they stop, and the individuals who engaged in them find other ways to attain their ends or satisfy their desires; so that the nation is not called upon to see what kind of trade or how much or how little trade is done. It has no business to compel trade by a bribe, or to punish it by penalties. It does its whole duty when it takes its hands off, and looks the other way. The "Protectionist" bogy, therefore, of the "unfavorable balance of trade," which for fifty years and more he has been evoking to scare the people with, is a pure fiction of a perverted political vision. There is no such thing (in other words, no such a

"Mrs. Harris"), and any tendency to such a danger meets constantly a self-limiting brake in the mechanism of commerce that reverses, at a certain point, the whole movement.

There is really no more need of the Government's putting itself into a state of concern and anxiety about the amount we buy of other nations than there is of its settling up the balances of the far larger aggregate—inconceivable in amount—of our purchases and bargains at home. Every single bargain with a foreigner is a purely individual one, and it is either good or bad as any particular bargain is which one of us makes with a fellow-citizen. If we find a profit in the bargain, in either case, we are apt to repeat it; if we find injury we go elsewhere or desist. If this were not so there could be no possible remedy. Any attempt to call in the aid of Congress to adjust matters like these—or to fix tariffs except strictly for revenue—is to introduce untold mischief and confusion. No Congress that ever sat at Washington is any more qualified to tinker with trade and private businesses and regulate the incidences and intricacies of its acts than it would be to patch up a supposed error in the precession of the equinox.

"Protectionism" has really no correct conception of what "trade" is. It treats foreign

trade as it does the cholera, or yellow fever, by building a quarantine against it in the style of a Chinese wall. But it relents in part, and inconsistently, by allowing some of the noxious germs to pass over the wall and so endanger our economic health. Its only logical position was set forth by Henry C. Carey, who had a clear vision on some points of political economy, who said that it "would be better commercially for this country if the Atlantic Ocean were a sea of fire." This was truly brave and consistent. It is exceedingly refreshing too, in these days of fraudulent cries for "Protection and Reciprocity"—two things that, where they are not purposed shams, go together with precisely the same effect that is produced by pouring a hogshead of water on a garden bonfire.

There is no "Protectionist" living, or that ever did live, who can tell what difference there is economically, in the act of a farmer who lives in southern Vermont, who goes to Massachusetts and buys a horse and takes it home with him, and that of a farmer in northern Vermont who steps over into Canada, on the next farm to his own, and buys a horse which he takes to his Vermont stable. The transactions are precisely the same in essence and character. It is possible though, that the Canada horse was bought at a lower price

than the Massachusetts one was; but then, it may not have been—and either way, the transactions do not differ. But, because it is probable that horses can be procured cheaper in Canada to the extent, say, of $15 apiece, "Protectionism" says they must not be purchased. If you do purchase one you will be fined at least $15; and you must thank your stars that both fine and imprisonment are not meted out for so heinous a crime.

It may be interesting to see, at this point, just what damage this one obstruction in the tariff does to the nation economically. If we may conclude, from the incomplete census reports, that about twenty million horses are needed by us for constant use, then a tariff clause which compels them to cost us $15 more per head than they need to cost, inflicts a loss upon the country, in the purchase of one article, of $300,000,000. If the reader should take any "Protectionist" tariff schedule, line by line, and see what other things of equal importance or of more abundant use are made also irrationally dear, he will very soon find that our "Protection" Juggernaut is running over the necks of the people at a prodigious cost. And there is, positively, not a particle of compensation for this phlebotomy, as I shall show further on.

I have said that the "Protectionist" does not have an accurate conception of what "trade" is. Its *mutuality* of benefit he either does not perceive, or else willfully perverts. To be consistent (which is a virtue "Protectionism" has no alliance with), he ought not to kiss his wife if he is sure she takes any pleasure in the osculation, since *some* benefit is conferred on another party by the transaction. In economics, and in affection too, however, no one ever considers a benefit to another, concurrent with his own, a damage to himself. But you constantly hear this consideration expressed in mock terror by the High Tariffite—in this form perhaps: "Do you want to give England your market?" as if that were a stumper, or had the slightest conceivable relation to the subject.

All this confusion of mind comes from the idea that to trade with a foreigner is to help him, and hurt ourselves. What we know is, that it *does* help us, and that is enough to know, though it should be a mental satisfaction, at least, to us, to notice that because it helps him, it may for that very reason enable him to make our future bargains still better and better, the more he gains by them. But that he has, or can "have our market," in any exclusive sense, as is claimed by the "Protec-

tionist," I totally and unqualifiedly deny. The truth is, we do not have it ourselves when we shut it up. Trade consisting of exports and imports resembles a pair of shears. To reduce or obstruct either is to decrease the value of the instrument. We cannot buy of foreign tradesmen the $890,000,000 of wares a year we now buy, without paying for the goods. And it must be remembered that these are all paid for by goods or services of our own, not excepting the small amount of cash we may sometimes pay on balances, which is, itself, a commodity that some one, no matter who, has previously paid to us for goods or services.

Now, if we should hereafter import $1,400,000,000, by battering down the tariff walls, it would only be done because we could do so *with advantage*. The citizen doing a foreign trade, whether he be a "Protectionist" or a "Free Trader," would first look at his opportunity. It makes no difference which faith he holds; he would act precisely as his antagonist would. If there was a better bargain within his reach, from abroad, he would take it, and the payment consummating it would *send away* some production made here. This law is as unvarying a one as that of hydrostatics, which makes water seek its level. The "Protectionist" knows that domestic trades

are self-balancing, but owing to some species of color blindness, he cannot see that the interception of a State boundary or an ocean in no way changes the economic result. He is alarmed at the increase of imports to even the extent of $1,000,000; and yet he ought to know that such a purchase additional by us compels other nations, also, to buy an extra $1,000,000 worth of our commodities.

And the balance is sure to be kept, without invoking a Congressional panacea, which can do nothing but injury. It matters not that the balance, one way or the other, is completed without reference to calendar months. The fact that we seem to buy more than we sell one year, is pretty good evidence that some other year we shall sell more than we buy. Our domestic balances do not act differently, and whether trade be foreign or domestic, it is always a matter between individuals solely; is not the proper concern of any Government; is, in its entire nature, beneficent, and the more beneficent, the more it is left untrammeled and let alone. The day is swiftly coming when the Government will no more be permitted to tell its people where, and of whom, it shall buy its goods — under tariff fines for disobedience — than it will be permitted to tell its young men and young

women whom they shall marry. A direction in the one case is fully as offensive and impertinent as it would be in the other.

It is thought by the "Protectionist" to be a specially *American* thing to refuse to buy a foreign commodity. A certain apparently paretical individual, in addressing his "Protectionist" confrères at Rochester the other day, declared that he "would not buy a pair of French calfskin shoes if he could get them for ten cents," so devoted was he—we are led to infer—to American leather. But it wouldn't do to trust him to fulfill that declaration. Unless he is really an imbecile, he has always done as Tariffites do equally with others: he has — when not hindered — bought what is cheapest in relation to real value. He would both injure his country and himself if he did otherwise. It would not only be unpatriotic to do what he claimed was patriotic—it would be simply idiotic. Not even "Protectionism" has got to this low stage of paresis yet.

It was Henry Clay who gave the name of the "American System" to "Protection" in 1824. Webster was then opposed to it, and denied the applicability of the name. He resented the assumption that one form of Tariffism was any more patriotic than another, or that any man or party had other aims than to

promote American interests. "If reasons are to be given," he said, "it is a little curious to know with what propriety of speech this *imitation of other nations* is denominated an 'American' policy; while, on the contrary, a preference of our own established system as it now actually exists, and has always existed, is called a *Foreign* policy. This favorite American policy is what America has *never tried;* and this odious foreign policy is what, as we are told, *foreign States have never pursued*."

If any one will calmly sit down and read all that Hamilton, Clay and Webster have written and said about "Protection" (for they have all, at certain periods, spoken against it), he will see that they only favored it—when they *did* favor it—against the hostile tariffs of other nations, and freely admitted the beneficence of unrestricted commerce. "I, too," said Clay, "am a friend to Free Trade, but it must be a Free Trade of perfect reciprocity." This was equivalent to Garfield's belief "in a 'Protection' that leads to ultimate Free Trade." When they spoke for "Protection," it was always with the qualification that it was to be tentative and temporary; and if they were living to-day, and should demand double the rate of their highest Tariff, our modern "Protectionists" would dub them hideous "Free Traders."

Not one of them ever asked for "Protection" to keep or to make wages high.

"Protectionists" claim that manufactures could not exist in the United States without help from the Government. The fact is that no manufactures of importance, or of large extent, exist here now (except of newly invented wares), which did not exist before, or while "Protectionism" was in its homœopathic infancy. Some of the most prosperous manufactures we have, have either grown up without tariff help, or have continued to thrive with a tariff withdrawn from them. The whole history of this talk is the history of a deceptive pretext used in some other countries, as well as here, to obtain Government help to swell profits already sufficiently remunerative. A high tariff on raw materials, in which this country specially indulges, is an absolute hindrance and handicap to manufactures. It has actually made wool, which sold for $1 a pound and upward twenty-eight years ago, sell for less than twenty-eight cents now. The history of wool Protection alone, furnishes a model object-lesson of the result of a "false philosophy" freely exploited, of which the public should be constantly reminded. "Protection" has done more than any other maleficent factor to destroy agriculture, to make abandoned farms, and to blanket the

most fertile states of the West with an almost continuous carpet of mortgages. It has practically destroyed commerce under the American flag, and made ship-building a lost art. It is estimated that we now pay annually $200,000,000 in freight charges to foreign ships, that we ought to be able to pay to ships made here, which the protective delusion has prevented us from making. And one disgraceful result of this policy is the fact that ships built through the employment of American capital, abroad, can be used, in case of a war, by the nation whose flag they sail under, against our own country. Was there ever a more scathing irony than to call the doctrine which does this the "American System?"

"Protectionists" never see that *labor* and *manufactures* are not things in themselves valuable. It is only their useful or desirable *results* that we care for. To labor to no end, or to manufacture something absolutely worthless, would be worse than to have no stimulus to labor, and no manufactures. Since it is *results* only that we want, it is most to our profit to obtain these results where we can procure them to the best advantage. If everybody had Aladdin's lamp, our best business would be to press the button, and get our desires gratified without further effort. As we have

no such device, the next best thing is to be permitted to buy where we can buy the cheapest, and sell where we can sell the dearest.

One of the difficulties which would still inhere in "Protectionism," if it were a good system, is the fact that a committee of miraculous wisdom and goodness could not apply it equitably to those supposed to be entitled to it; and if it could once be so applied, the derangement of equities by changed commercial conditions would call for a new adjustment every year.

One of the worst results of the system is the corruption it is sure to breed, and which would alone condemn it if it were wholly based, as it is not, on a correct theory. The alliance of the Government with special businesses, employing hundreds of millions of capital, whereby the Government puts a siphon on the public treasury, and turns a liberal portion of its contents, which are the people's hard earnings, into the pockets of private individuals, is the most positively vicious and immoral performance that legislation can be guilty of. The party which proposes to do this, and does do it, can command untold millions of campaign money from these beneficiaries, and can practically destroy the integrity of the ballot and free Government itself.

It can easily be seen, by a study of the way

taken to secure high duties, that the duties will inevitably go to the log-rollers who will pay most in an election *quid pro quo* to get them, and who will join hands at Washington to help each other. As it happens, men whose businesses cannot plead even a "Protectionist's" excuse for having them applied are favored, while those not rich enough to maintain a lobby or render the election service must go without. In any event, it is the beneficiary of the tariff who makes it what it is, and the consumer who is its victim, and pays the ultimate bill. The threadbare argument that "Protection" makes high wages is one of the most astounding fallacies of modern times. All trustworthy statistics in the civilized world contradict it. Here are a few facts in proof of my position:

1. The wages of carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, and various other craftsmen in our country, which is under the influence of "Protection" throughout its entire territory, vary from nearly two-thirds to one-half of the maximum price paid for their labor in various cities, from Portland to San Francisco. They not only vary greatly through spaces of territory, but they vary through different points of time under precisely the same tariff. These two circumstances could not possibly happen if wages were fixed by "Protection."

2. In every fair comparison of countries with each other, wages can be shown to rise as the customs duties are lowered. Free-trade England to-day pays the highest wages known in Europe; and France, Germany, Austria, and Russia pay in an order exactly related to the lowness of the tariff—ending with Russia, where the highest tariff assures the lowest wages. (One should be fair enough to say on this question, though, that there are other factors than the tariff which help to make wages what they are, some of which I will call in evidence soon.)

3. Where statistics on this point have been presented, it can be proved that wages in the unprotected industries, side by side with those which are protected, have for half a century together been higher than those "Protection" gives.

4. But it must be always remembered that nominal wages and real wages differ. The dollar unit of wages under free trade does not need to be clipped in its effort to buy scores of commodities commanding prices artificially high. The real wage dollar, therefore, is likely to be worth a dollar and a half where trade is not restricted, while the dollar and a half under "Protection" may be reduced in purchasing value to a dollar.

5. Finally, of the things that go to make wages high in the United States the following are most potent: The beneficence of a free government; the absence of a standing army; the immense breadth of country, with its fertile soil and diversified climate; superiority of race, and the sparseness of population to a square mile. It really makes some difference, taking this latter point in view, whether there are eighteen persons to a square mile, or from two hundred and fifty to upward of three hundred, which is the ratio substantially between this country and Europe. It is always true, as the proverb says, that "where two laborers seek one employer, the employer fixes the price of wages; but, where two employers seek one laborer, the laborer fixes the price." In this country the laborer has had a much larger voice than laborers elsewhere in fixing the wage-price, no matter what our tariff for the time might be. He had his relatively high price here in respect to foreign labor, even as far back as colonial times, when there was no tariff to punish or afflict him.

6. The influence of labor unions, and of improved automatic machinery, which we can point to as something dominating here, has worked distinctly to keep labor up.

7. Where disastrous strikes and lock-outs and

labor tumults occur you may expect to see the "Protection" Grand Lama standing behind the spectacle as their visible creator. The loss of time alone caused by the attempt to put business on an artificial basis, and outside of natural laws, is a heavy draft upon the wages laborers secure under "Protection."

A further indictment against "Protectionism" is the facility it makes for the formation of trusts, of which we now have a hundred and over. I am aware that, when pinched for argument, the "Protectionist" tells us that there are trusts in England where "Protection" does not exist. If this is so, England has the consolation of having done nothing through legislation to make them. Everybody knows that you can catch a spirited horse that is confined to a high-fenced door-yard much easier than you can when he has his full liberty on a Dakota prairie. And, in the same way, a trust can more easily corral the public to its commanded high prices inside of a tariff wall. The most noted "Protectionist" papers admit this fact, in cool moments, by frequently urging the reduction or entire removal of duties on all articles that are exploited in price by a trust for robbing the public.

"Protection" creates substantially a new crime, which could not exist without tariff du-

ties. It is the high duty, in fact, that makes smuggling feasible. It was estimated by Secretary McCulloch twenty-six years ago that the frauds upon the revenue at that time were nearly $100,000,000 annually. Smuggling is the sure effect of this system, which treats the laudable effort and natural right of men—and particularly women—to buy goods at a low price as a crime. The mental process of the smuggler is not connected with a feeling of turpitude at all. He feels mainly that he has rescued for himself a natural right, of which he has been unjustly deprived. Is it right to make it possible to confuse the domain and practice of morals in this way?

It is one of the delusions of the "Protectionist" that free trade is a theory. It is often said by him, when troubled to straighten out his own absurd philosophy: "Oh, well—free trade is very good as a theory, but it isn't practical." But this double statement is contradictory. Either one-half of the assertion or the other half is wrong. If it is a good theory, it will work well; and if it will not work well, it is not a correct theory. The truth of the matter is, that "Protectionism" itself is the theory. It was not the foxes in the fable who kept their tails who were the theorists: the theorist was the one who lost his in a trap, and who went about

trying to persuade the others that it was much better to change the natural law, and go without a tail. Free trade preceded "Protection," and is nothing but an observance of laws as nature made them. It is "Protectionism" which is the usurper, the nostrum-proposer, and which has a theory of action it calls better than natural law. On it, therefore, falls the duty of proving that commerce with its tail cut off is an improvement on commerce as the Creator intended it should be.

A very fallacious argument which it uses to make this doctrine accepted may be called the fallacy of heterogeneous comparison. I give a sample below which was used by the "Protectionists" in 1888: "In Norway the people have free trade, and laborers get about 29 cents a day. In the United States we have 'Protection,' and laborers get $2 a day." The moral drawn was: See the beneficence of "Protection." Now the syllogism would have been precisely the same, and the premises and conclusion would have been equally true if the argument had read as follows: "In Norway the people do not have rattlesnakes, and laborers get about 29 cents a day. In the United States we have rattlesnakes, and laborers get $2 a day." Moral: See the beneficence of rattlesnakes. The fraud in this argument lies in

heterogeneous comparison—in the fact that Norway differs in almost every possible respect from this country; the points of difference being in climate, government, size, soil, educational and other equipment of the laborer, etc. Now, if Norway had had a high tariff and we had had free trade, the disparity would still exist in comparing ours to a small, inhospitable country—the southern boundary of which is as far north as Labrador, and the arable area of which is not greater than that of Illinois—that exists now. The free trader has a right to believe that the disparity would be far greater, and overwhelmingly against "Protection." But you hear such shallow and self-stultifying arguments *ad nauseam*. The "Protectionist" never takes two countries that are homogeneous for his comparison; for, when he does, the comparison trips up his protective conclusion. Chauncey Depew found that London was the dumping-ground of Europe for those who had failed to succeed on the continent. But he forgot to say that they all failed in countries giving "Protection," and went to one devoted to free trade for betterment. Probably they are largely the off-scourings of the earth, and worthless wherever they are; but when any really find labor in England, they find a higher price for it than they could get in any "Protection" country

that they left. And this is a comparison of nations mostly alike.

Equally fair and significant is it to say that wages in modern free-trade England are higher than they were when England was devoted to "Protection." The unfair comparisons "Protectionists" always employ in trying to show what "Protectionism" does can be made to prove any absurdity true. Suppose I say that in a boxing-match a man will do better to have one hand tied behind his back. The statement would be absurd; but I bring John L. Sullivan on the platform, and pit against him a rickety dwarf. As a matter of course, in spite of the dwarf's two arms to Sullivan's one, the dwarf is knocked off the stage on the first encounter, and my contention is proved. To compare other countries with the United States is like matching one physically incompetent with Sullivan.

A serious loss which "Protection" inflicts, is the obstruction which it puts upon invention. So long as it makes it possible to employ dilapidated and ramshackle machinery at a profit, there is no motive or incentive to devise better, or to introduce economic methods of manufacture. The American nation, with its Yankee wit and boundless resources, does not need to plead the baby act, or ask odds of any nation

in the world. But, while the government insists upon helping manufactures, and paying money also to have new manufactures established, the largess will undoubtedly be greedily accepted, and additional props will be asked for. "Protection" is like the camel which first stuck its head in the Sheik's tent, then its forefeet and shoulders, then half its body, and, finally, went entirely in and took possession by driving the owner out. In like manner has this fraudulent system dealt with the temple of the American government, and dispossessed the people of their most sacred rights.

I may be asked why it is, if "Protectionism" is so harmful a system, that it is maintained in various countries and for long periods. Two reasons sufficiently account for this: (1) Governments, whether monarchical or republican, have need of vast sums of money, which must be raised by taxing the people. But human nature is so constituted that taxes are specially odious. Now, it was long ago discovered that a government can raise ten dollars through indirect taxes, like imposts, without the people's knowledge or complaint, where one dollar of direct taxation would excite their dislike and resentment. (2) In addition to this, the beneficiaries of "Protection" are invariably picked and powerful allies of a government or party.

And when a government or party wants support, these purchased friends can be depended on to help it by helping themselves.

It must be remembered, too, that the name under which this system masquerades is of itself seductive. It is so pleasant to be "protected," or to think you are, to obtain something for nothing, which is what it promises, that this alone gives it a presumptive claim.

As it depends for its consideration wholly on a superficial reasoning that looks plausible—and the great multitude reason, when they reason at all, superficially—adherents to it are easily gained and easily made fanatical.

One of the reasons why "Protection" is so imperfectly understood at this time, and is taken at its own estimate by so many is, that for thirty years and over it was hardly an issue in political contests. For fifteen years before the civil war broke out, the country, by a general consensus, had seen the tariff adapt itself to a revenue basis, and had seen great prosperity as the result. High "Protection" had received its death-blow, and would never have been successfully heard of again had it not been for the war. The prosecution of this required money, and plenty of it; and when it came to raising revenue, both parties were practically agreed. The only question was, not

how low or how high the tariff rates should be, but how much money could be got by imposts. The free trader did not object to any combination of specific and ad valorem duties upon any article, even if the full duty equaled 300 per cent., so long as the requisite revenue resulted. On the other hand, the "Protectionist" could see with complacency the duty low, if in that way more money came to the public treasury. It was not disputed then by anybody that the tariff was a tax. It was known and *felt* to be. But under this state of things, and the continued necessity of revenues long after the war had ended, a generation grew up knowing nothing of the philosophy and effect of a tariff, but accepting "Protection," for the simple reason that to them, no matter how absurd and great was the anachronism, nothing better or even different was familiar. The topic had been put in a poultice. But we are changing all that very fast.

We have got rid of chattel slavery in this country. The next duty is to get rid of our commercial bondage. All predictions by "Protectionists" of the dreadful things that will happen when their Grand Lama ceases to inspire worship are never realized. Our best eras of prosperity were when we had the least "Protection." England gained all her modern

commercial supremacy by throwing "Protection" off; the French thought thirty years ago that the Cobden English treaty would ruin their manufactures, whereas it greatly extended the French markets; and Germany was fairly lifted up when the divisive tariff walls of the various states were swept away for a common Zollverein. The whole history of trade is, that the freer it is the better it is. It was the vexatious domination of England in our colonial trade arrangements—a complex and tormenting body of restrictions—that furnished the just cause for the American Revolution.

It may sound strangely to "Protectionists" —whose sincerity on behalf of their faith in the main I do not question—to be told that their wall between nations is in its nature barbaric and immoral. So far as it breaks down the solidarity of humanity and seeks selfish benefits and rejoices in crippling the trade and industry of other nations, it antagonizes the fundamental groundwork of Christianity — the brotherhood of man. Perhaps "Protectionists" may make a better world, in their own estimation, than the one now existing, which the Creator designed. They at any rate hold up the ideal of a different one. If their scheme were made universal and complete, we should have every nation on the earth in separate

compartments. The oceans, economically speaking, would serve as seas of fire: instead of peace and brotherhood, and the wholesome trade relations Nature intended, by giving to each people differing gifts and endowments, we should have jealousies, irritations and wars. The forces that make for civilization would be seriously handicapped, or crushed. An isolation like that of China in the twelfth century would be the condition to covet and admire.

This is the exact reverse of Emerson's wise injunction, to "hitch your wagon to a star." It would be to put Diabolus in command. Does not every sane man really know that human fellowship, business comity and close friendliness between nations are factors not only of economic value, but something that money solely cannot buy, favoring an enlightened in place of a sordid selfishness, and helping to bring about the true federation of man? Let us, then, break down and not establish hateful barriers—remembering the fine spirit of Cowper's lines:

> "Lands intersected by a narrow frith
> Abhor each other. Mountains interposed
> Make enemies of nations who had, else,
> Like kindred drops, been mingled into one."

Elsewhere, upon commerce, he adds:

"Again—the bond of commerce was designed
To associate all the branches of mankind;
And if a boundless plenty be the robe,
Trade is the golden girdle of the globe.

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"Each climate needs what other climes produce,
And offers something to the general use;
No land but listens to the common call,
And in return receives supply from all."

The crowning absurdity of "Protectionism" is its antagonism of the natural instinct of man. Instead of seeking plenty and abundance it directly opposes what every man is secretly striving for, and aims to produce scarcity and deprivation. Instead of promoting cheapness—which means the easiness of getting things—it works on behalf of dearness, and difficulty of attainment. It is very much afraid of finding "a cheap man" if the man finds "a cheap coat." It thinks that "cheap and nasty go together"—to quote its greatest American apostle. After establishing a costly governmental machinery to produce these monstrous and unnatural results, it sometimes turns around and tells us that things are really very much cheaper than before (as they have once said they should not be); and that our imports have greatly increased under the higher duties (which is a result they generally pro-

fess to be as afraid of as Satan is reputed to be of holy water).

It should only be necessary to state these conflicting postulates of this singular philosophy, with which we are all now familiar, to show its worthlessness, and to prove that there is not and never was a beneficent "Protection," and that there has not been and never can be a maleficent Free Trade.

JOEL BENTON.